

# *The Free Thinker*

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## *A Case for Christopher Marlowe*

Christopher Marlowe, not even two months older than Shakespeare, was the acknowledged creator of the classical Elizabethan drama in blank verse by seven great tragedies of an epoch-making nature, among others the first great drama of Doctor Faust, which later inspired Goethe to his life's work. But apart from being an ingenious dramatist and poet, he was also a man who lived dangerously, working as a spy for Sir Francis Walsingham until his death in 1590, having reputedly homosexual connections and being (reputedly) an atheist.

In 1589 he was involved in a deadly duel with William Bradley. Marlowe's friend and colleague Thomas Watson interfered, and since this was the man Bradley really had sought quarrel with, Bradley left Marlowe and concentrated on Watson, who killed Bradley. This extremely thrilling triple duel must have made a strong impression on Marlowe - if Watson hadn't interfered, Marlowe would have been dead, being a small person (166 cm) and no fighter. Watson had a short term in prison for the duel, while Marlowe was acquitted.

May 18th 1593 Marlowe was arrested for alleged atheism and suspected coining of money. He had been informed against by his colleague Thomas Kyd, who had been arrested and tortured for political pamphlets. Marlowe was released on bail but forbidden to leave London, where the plague was raving. His life was on a tight-rope, and the odds were against him. Others had been executed for less. At this moment, on May 30th, he is accidentally killed in a fight over a bill in a Deptford inn by three companions who had been his friends. According to the coroner's report, Marlowe died instantly of a wound by a knife above his eye. Because of the plague situation, the body was instantly buried without even having been identified in an anonymous grave no one knows where.

Now, is this a credible story? Marlowe was an expert on intrigue, which he had proved in seven great tragedies, all works of a genius. Is it probable that he allowed himself to be involved in a fight with three common men for some pennies? No, it is much more probable that he arranged this scene without other witnesses in order to escape the difficult situation of his life and officially vanish. Pronounced dead, he would be free. All his three murderers were on the payroll of Sir Thomas Walsingham, cousin to Sir Francis Walsingham and Marlowe's benefactor - some even say lover.

The body that was slipped away could have been someone else's. There has never been evidence of Marlowe's death, the body never had a known grave, the brawl took place when the inn was empty with only its owner, a widow, present; the body was never identified and never had an autopsy, and the death certificate, discovered in 1925, seems fabricated. Experts have stated that no one can die of a wound of that sort which according to the coroner Marlowe died of instantly. Experts have stated, that to die of such a wound would take at least a few days. According to the coroner's report, Marlowe was the attacker whom the defendant killed by accident in self-defence while the other two did nothing. All four had been associating peacefully the whole day, after dinner Marlowe rested on a bench while the other three remained seated, then came the bill, and Marlowe suddenly attacked the middle man from behind, who could not defend himself, and sitting in the middle he couldn't even turn around against Marlowe. All the same, according to the coroner, he managed to give Marlowe a fatal wound above the eye, which no one else could have died of, but Marlowe did.

Also the coroner had been selected by Sir Thomas Walsingham. Every detail in the coroner's report seems premeditated long in advance to create a perfect crime scene in which Marlowe could officially vanish for good. The report seems fabricated to the very purpose of leaving no doubts and nothing to question. The fellow responsible for

Marlowe's accidental death was of course prosecuted but soon released since he had acted in self-defence, and he immediately continued in the service of Sir Thomas Walsingham.

According to theories, Marlowe escaped to France and Italy. The scene in "Romeo and Juliet" where Tybalt kills Mercutio seems copied from the very fight between Marlowe, Bradley and Watson - but of course dramatized. Mercutio then could very well be a self-portrait of the young Marlowe.

There was one drawback in Marlowe's staged death - he could not return to life. He could continue to write plays, but not in his own name. The name provided for Marlowe's continued progress as a playwright was found in a decent fellow who willingly let himself be paid by Walsingham to give his name to Marlowe's plays. His name was William Shakespeare, an honest actor from Stratford.

*"Your name from hence immortal life shall have,  
Though I, once gone, to all the world must die...  
Your monument shall be my gentle verse,  
Which eyes not yet created shall o'er-read;" - Sonnet LXXXI.*

This is the Marlowe case in brief.

Without doubt, the reports, rumours and backbiting on Marlowe must have been an unbearable burden to him. This remarkable shoemaker's son from Canterbury, an only son with four younger sisters, worked himself up alone to a brilliant degree in Cambridge. Just this career of a student without any family fortunes or titles must have been something unique in England at that time. This brilliant intellectual talent came by his sheer endowment early into contact with such influential gentlemen as Sir Walter Raleigh, perhaps the most colourful of all the Elizabethans beside the earl of Essex, and Sir Philip Sidney, another literary genius who died young, but who had time to act as a host to Giordano Bruno when he visited England. It's possible and probable that Christopher Marlowe might have been in some contact with Giordano Bruno, since you can trace some influence from him and from Sidney, which surprisingly is voiced in "Love's Labour's Lost".

But Marlowe was never an atheist. That reputation was false. In almost all of Marlowe's plays there are religious arguments, which show an astounding ability to discern between what is true and false. In "Tamburlaine the Great", the first classical Elizabethan drama, the chief character Timur Lenk rejects Mohammed and denounces him, but he never rejects God. This is a typical Marlowian differentiation. In "The Jew of Malta" the greedy Jew occasionally seems both heroic and sympathetic in his wild intrigues, and his religion is never derided. When he quite surprisingly perishes in the end it almost seems unfair. This Jew Barabbas sustains the whole play by his enormously complex religious character, just like Shylock does the same in "The Merchant of Venice", who could be regarded as a more modulated and developed version of the Barabbas character. Marlowe goes furthest in his interesting religious dealings in "The Massacre at Paris", where the victim to the slaughter is religion itself, which commits suicide by its moral collapse and bankruptcy. A better reason for never more dealing with any kind of religion couldn't be imagined on the part of Marlowe or king Henry IV of France.

Marlowe might very well have known king Henry IV of Navarre personally. "The Massacre at Paris" seems to convey that impression, and even more "Love's Labour's Lost", which leads us to suggest that Marlowe escaped after May 1593 to king Henry in France. He had earlier been on missions to Rheims, he must have known France well

with the problems of the Huguenots, and many English Catholics had sought refuge at Rheims, whom he knew, since he had been spying on them for Sir Francis Walsingham.

"Tamburlaine the Great" has another interesting common denominator with the historical Shakespeare plays. In this early drama the poet already demonstrates his total freedom to deal with historical facts exactly as he wishes. Everything is allowed in rewriting history in order to fit it in on the stage. Tamburlaine has exactly as little to do with the real Timur Lenk as Shakespeare's Antony has any resemblance with the historical Antony, the murderer of Cicero. Such perfect parallels in the utterly shameless and disrespectful way of illustrating history are more than just striking.

Neither was Marlowe any proved coiner of money. It is true that he knew the art of coining base money, he probably tested doing it when he was in Holland,

("When I have seen the hungry ocean gain  
Advantage on the kingdom on the shore,  
And the firm soil win on the wat'ry main..." Sonnet LXIV,)

but there is no evidence that he ever practised that craft in England. Thus the Crown had no real charge against him.

Also his reputed homosexuality could be questioned. It is most probable that he with other British poets of the highest rank (like Byron, Shelley and Oscar Wilde, whom we must never forget was married and had two children: his homosexuality was in fact only a left-handed escapade,) quite simply was liberal enough to be bisexual - or asexual, which highly intellectual thinkers often are. This gives the Marlowe theory an advantage to both the candidatures of Shakespeare and Stanley to the authorship of the dramas: without any family ties Marlowe could more easily concentrate on creating the world's greatest dramas than both Shakespeare and Stanley.

When Marlowe vanishes from life, Shakespeare doesn't yet exist as a poet or playwright. Four months after the Deptford 'murder' he turns up as the author of his first publication, the poem "Venus and Adonis" eloquently dedicated to the dashing earl of Southampton, Henry Wriothesley, which dedication makes it impossible for anyone to doubt the author's identity as W. Shakespeare. This dedication eliminates every suspicion of Marlowe's haunting the verses, although the poem fits perfectly as a continuation and development of the theme in the last work in Marlowe's name, the idyllic love poem "Hero and Leander". Perhaps it was necessary to furnish the two Shakespearean poems with dedications to avoid suspicion: The two poems fit as a continuation of Marlowe's poem like hands into their perfect gloves, as if, as one scholar put it, "*Marlowe reminds you more of Shakespeare than Shakespeare does himself.*"

Fleeing from England, things indicate that he found a safe environment with the knavish king Henry IV, who took nothing seriously and took all political intrigues for a joke. He changed religion a number of times and didn't care to which church he belonged as long as it matched his politics. Such a king would have been the ideal refuge to a vulnerable adventurer, who was embarking on a new life. "Love's Labour's Lost" was probably written on this occasion as the poet's first comedy. It's an intimate chamber comedy with the thinnest plot of all the plays, suited to a very small stage but full of French wit and trivialities: it's a trifle and the ideal experiment in comedy for a playwright who never had tried writing comedies in his life. Much in this almost over-spiritual comedy reminds you of "As You Like It", which also takes place in France. Most Shakespeare scholars agree, that "Love's Labour's Lost" can only have been written by someone who knew France and Henry IV intimately.

Then follow the Italian comedies, which betray the same thing: plays like "The Taming of the Shrew", "The Two Gentlemen of Verona", "Romeo and Juliet" and "The Merchant of Venice" can only have been written by someone who stayed long enough

in these north-eastern parts of Italy to know them more than well. The local knowledge they display, like for instance about the water ways between Venice and Milan, could in those days only be acquired on the spot. To this comes the phenomenon about the sources to some of the Italian plays.

The source of "Romeo and Juliet" was a widely read and extremely popular short story by Luigi da Porto (1485-1529), which the poet simply has dramatized, but with some innovation: the characters of Mercutio, the Nurse, Benvolio and Prince Escalus have been invented, neither Paris nor Juliet's father play any great part in the short story, Tybalt is killed by Romeo without having killed any Mercutio, and Romeo is not dead when Juliet awakes in the tomb. The story of "Othello" is a true one recorded by G.B.Giraldo Cintio (1504-73), who got it live from Emilia, Iago's widow. In "Othello" the dramatist has not invented any extra characters, but he has given Othello a character of his own, the moor is not a nobly tragic figure in the original, but the whole series of events is a most brutal and vulgar story of vile desire. Iago's motivation is, that Desdemona has turned him down, she can't understand that he, who is already married, could try anything with her, who passionately loves only the moor, and so Iago decides to revenge himself on her. The story is very racist: to be turned down for a moor is the supreme insult to Iago, who breeds suspicion in the moor and prompts him to murder, which they however commit together, breaking down a wall on Desdemona, who is crushed. They were both tried for murder, but Othello admitted nothing and was acquitted though dishonoured for life, while Iago was badly tortured and died from it. The only name mentioned in the whole novelette is "Disdemona", the "un-devilish", while all others remain anonymous.

More remarkable is the origin to "The Merchant of Venice". This story is part of a collection like "Decamerone" written by a certain Ser Giovanni, and this short story is called "*Il Pecorone*". The remarkable thing is that the poet has come across this obscure collection of short stories, found this long one and dramatized it exactly according to the text. There are no extra inventions here. The drama concentrates the action on the middle part of the story, which really is like a short novel with complicated intrigues and long voyages in far off countries; and every detail is copied from the story: the Jew's refusing to compromise, the faked court of justice - only the Shylock character is developed and is like a brother of Barabbas in "The Jew of Malta", only more human.

Published short stories like "Il Pecorone", "The Book of Juliet" and "The Moor of Venice" could hardly have been available in English. A short story like "Il Pecorone" can only have been available in Italy. But W. Shakespeare never left England and did probably not know Italian. One who did know Italian was Thomas Kyd, the author of the most successful "The Spanish Tragedy", the first blood-curdling horror drama, which instantly turned Thomas Kyd into Marlowe's most dangerous competitor. Kyd's dramas are often spiced with Italian. If Kyd knew Italian it is probable that also Marlowe did, or got the ambition to learn it, linguistically talented as he was; and if he went to Italy after some time in France, which seems probable that he did, he must have gloated in thrilling modern Italian short novels and stories in order to gratefully use them for material to practise on as a playwright.

Thomas Kyd is intimately connected with Marlowe's fate. They worked together and vied with each other and were probably both good friends and hearty enemies, as great stage personalities often are. Lying on the rack, Kyd denounced Marlowe. Agents of Her Majesty's government had ransacked Kyd's apartment for pamphlets against Flemish immigrants, found nothing of that kind but found the more other interesting things, like deeply compromising atheistic writings, for which Kyd was arrested. These extremely daring and religiously challenging writings Kyd blamed on Marlowe and made a full statement implicating Marlowe completely, being forced to any unwilling confessions by the most insensitive machinery of the rack. Kyd was released but later

on died from the after-effects of his torture. Marlowe might have felt some guilt for Kyd's undeserved fate, since Marlowe really was much guiltier of religious speculations than Kyd, who never had any interest in politics or religion. Like Michelangelo destroyed his own frescoes in the municipality of Florence when his competitor Leonardo's frescoes were ruined from sheer bad luck, so Marlowe might have decided to never again appear under his own name as a playwright after the most brutal rape of Thomas Kyd's muse.

There are more implications. One of the strangest is the secret contents in "As You Like It". Not only do we here find the strange character of Jacques, who many believe to be a self-portrait of the poet, and which is convincing as such. Two other characters reveal even more than Jacques: Touchstone and the preposterous priest Sir Oliver Martext, who really has nothing to do with the play. The knave Touchstone has several interesting quarrels with exciting import if you are familiar with the case of Marlowe. In one place Touchstone scolds the churl William, whom he calls a humbug and falsification while he himself is genuine. This is irrelevant and incomprehensible nonsense to each one who knows nothing of the Marlowe case, since the only possible interpretation is that Marlowe in this disguise unmask William Shakespeare.

Sir Oliver Martext is as a mere character even more irrelevant. This is the only instance in the whole Shakespeare production where a superfluous character has been introduced to just utter a few insignificant lines and vanish. There is no explanation to his total misplacement. But in the First Folio the name is written Mar-text, and his only line of any meaning is his last: "...ne'er a fantastical knave of them all shall flout me out of my calling." The visiting appearance of Mar-text can only be explained in one way: he is the abbreviation of the clandestine message of *Marlowe's text*. This of course appears as a somewhat roundabout explanation, but let us remember the great pamphlet war in Canterbury in the 1580's. The author of seven pamphlets causing great religious controversy was a certain pseudonym who has never been found out calling himself *Martin Marprelate*. Now, Canterbury, from whence the pamphlets proceeded, was the hometown of Christopher Marlowe. This, of course, proves nothing, but might be the only possible explanation to that pamphlet war, which the spurious name of *Sir Oliver Martext* might be a last distant echo of.

These are but small links in a long chain of Marlowe indications in the play. But just such small hints so well disguised might have proved too much. Just before the play was to be printed in 1600 it was withdrawn from the presses, someone apparently had found it too risky and dangerous, and it was never printed until in The First Folio 23 years later.

These are but small trivialities in the overwhelming concordance between Shakespeare and Marlowe, as if Shakespeare had been Marlowe's double. The great circumstantial evidence is the style of Marlowe and Shakespeare, which is identical like finger-prints of the same person but in different ages. Scholars have always recognized traits of Marlowe's hand in early Shakespeare plays like "Titus Andronicus", "The Taming of the Shrew", "King John" and "Henry VI". Characters like Richard III, King Lear, Macbeth, Coriolanus and Timon of Athens are like aggrandized developments of such early heaven-storming Marlowe characters as Tamburlaine, doctor Faustus and the Jew Barabbas of Malta. The only chronicle play of Marlowe's, "Edward II", is a clear prototype to all the chronicles of Shakespeare. Concerning "Henry VI" there is a fragment by Marlowe called "Richard, Duke of York", which clearly is an earlier version of the third part of "Henry VI". The strange thing about this early version is, that everything is already there: the whole tragedy is developed, the ultimate personality of Richard III is already finished, even the horrible war scenes with the father who has killed his son and the son who has killed his father are complete *in Marlowe's version*.

We must not forget the Shakespeare apocrypha. There were six additional plays to which this name was attached as the author: "Lochrine", "Sir John Oldcastle", "The True Chronicle History of Thomas Lord Cromwell", "The London Prodigal", "The Puritan" and "A Yorkshire Tragedy". These six were sorted out as The First Folio was compiled as not on the level with the other 37 plays. But these six were printed in Shakespeare's name while he lived. It's quite possible that they were actually written by him - but not by Marlowe.

### *The Sun-Spots of the Poet.*

The first one is the most famous: Hamlet's folly. Hamlet is on the point of losing his head as he visits Ofelia with torn clothes and later on violates all limits to the correctness of behaviour for an heir to the throne in the violent scene against her. And the height in this disturbing middle part of the play, which always has caused so much concern and difficulties to actors and directors, is of course the suicide monologue.

All this folly, which is not to be found in the original story of Saxo Grammaticus, where Hamlet's folly finds completely different expressions, is singular to the author. Therefore there is only one interpretation: here is a personal self confession. Hamlet is such an extremely idiosyncratic individualist, that it can only be a self-portrait - and as such a unique expression of the poet. The problem is just, that this intricate irrational distracted playacting is completely ununderstandable.

Is it then possible to place such a torn personality in connection with William Stanley, the 6th earl of Derby, the candidate to the throne of the Catholics, a highly educated jurist with responsibility for a county, and with additional responsibility as the governor and owner of the Isle of Man, happily married with three sons and two castles, an established man of the world in the highest possible social position with a wife well seen at court? Lord Stanley, the proposed candidate of many scholars to the authorship of Shakespeare's works, is a far too well-balanced man to have drawn a self-portrait in the madness and tragic nature of Hamlet. There is no evidence that he ever would have written a single play himself, although George Fenner, a Catholic agent, wrote to Catholics abroad, that the earl of Derby "was far too busy writing plays to show any interest in the Catholic party". He would rather have been too busy governing the Isle of Man and Lancashire, bringing up his sons, maintaining his castles and properties, managing the administration of his theatre companies, keeping up his law duties and entertaining his wife to be able to write any of the Shakespeare plays. After all, these are not mere entertainments but rather part of the most advanced and difficult literature in the world. No one surpasses Shakespeare except Dante, and not even Dante surpasses the beauty of the Shakespearean sonnets.

Let's study Kit Marlowe, who at the age of 29 has to break off his career and go underground for the rest of his life to become a ghost writer to others and never again appear in public life, who always has had problems with women, who in "Edward II" describes relationships between men much more convincingly and intimately than between the sexes, and who also previously, like in "As You Like It", has shown an inclination to surreptitiously reveal self-confessions masked in mysteries. The extremely strained relationship between Hamlet and Ofelia fits perfectly to the case of Marlowe. It just couldn't fit more perfectly, because here we have glaringly clear the most characteristic of all symptoms of Marlowe: a bad relationship between man and women (Hamlet-Ofelia) but the best possible relationship between men (Hamlet-Horatio) - but please note: without any sign of homosexuality. That's Marlowe's sexual earmark: all his sexual relationships are bad, whether they are between the sexes or the same sex, while all his asexual relationships or Platonic friendships are perfect. And nothing would suit better into a case like Marlowe's than Hamlet's suicide monologue. Such a

case would if anything give frequent occasions to reflections upon suicide, and in a character like Hamlet he would have had the ideal opportunity to give vent to such broodings in artistic expression. It would be nothing less than the perfect self therapy. The distracted Hamlet could very well be regarded as the painful self-portrait of Marlowe - and then suddenly Hamlet starts to make sense.

Even greater expressions the sickly spots of the poet find in "King Lear", where the bitter disillusion of the central figure find cosmic expressions in a tragic madness that goes beyond everything. King Lear is no more than a consequence and development of the first cautious steps into Hamlet's folly. In "Hamlet" the sickly melancholy of bitterness carefully suggests itself in a daring effort to intimate an expression. In "King Lear" the poet goes the whole line and dares to cry out his universal pain much more than just sufficiently - there is no more need for any further madness after that. Lear is the last lunatic in the canon.

Two spots remain - "Coriolanus" and "Timon of Athens". Coriolanus is the total public enemy, who takes the consequences of the injustice he suffers from the state he has served. Also Coriolanus is a complex character, who from sheer nobility of spirit can't apply the populist methods demanded of a civil servant if he is to get any support from the common mob. He just can't lower himself to show the vulgarity needed to become popular. As a consequence he is misunderstood and becomes unpopular and is frozen out by the more popular politicians whose positions depend on the favours of the common mob, whereupon he, being a completely honest man, takes the consequences in full and joins the enemies to the state to take up arms against his own home country: his logic makes him a traitor. This character is also a most personal invention of the author: Plutarch has not the slightest indication of the profound political psychology which is so predominant in the drama. Thus we can guess a self-portrait here as well. Of Lord Stanley? Impossible. He never wavered in his loyalty to the Crown, and King James did himself intervene for Lord Stanley in his great family trial of many years. He was loyalty impersonated.

Kit Marlowe was in the 1580's in the secret service of Sir Francis Walsingham spying on Catholics in France. Associating with them in Rheims, he knew the psychology and reason of traitors, like Dostoyevsky learned to understand the psychology of criminals in the prisons of Siberia. We have already suggested Marlowe's increasing bitterness during the years. Here again Coriolanus suits perfectly into the pattern as a self-therapeutic expression of a volcanically deep resentment against the British Crown, who probably failed Christopher Marlowe when it should have protected him, considering his earlier services to the state.

Finally the total misanthropist Timon of Athens - again a perfectly personal expression of a deep disappointment in humanity and in life itself. The only woman parts in the whole play are two harlots appearing drunk with Alcibiades. Never was woman given a more bitter jibe in any play by this playwright. It's his maximum insult against the weaker sex. Also this would fit perfectly into the case of Christopher Marlowe - and nowhere else.

Finally an authentic document (somewhat shortened), the critical moment in Marlowe's life, which compels him to his most extraordinary fate - to be able to survive only by officially ceasing to exist. It's the royal agent Richard Baines' report on Marlowe to the Privy Council and the Queen:

"Containing the opinion of Christopher Marlowe concerning his damnable opinions and judgement of religion and scorn of God's word.

That the Indians and many Authors of antiquity have assuredly written of above 16 thousand years ago, whereas Adam is proved to have lived within 6 thousand years.

He affirms that Moses was but a Juggler and that one Harriot, being Sir Walter Raleigh's man, can do more than he.

That Moses made the Jews travel 11 years in the wilderness, which journey to the promised land might have been done in less than one year, to the intent that those who were privy to most of his subtleties might perish and so an everlasting superstition remain in the hearts of the people.

That the first beginning of Religion was only to keep men in awe.

That Christ was the son of a carpenter and that, if the Jews among whom he was born did crucify him, they best knew him and whence he came.

That Christ deserved to die better than Barabbas, and that the Jews made a good choice, though Barabbas was both a thief and a murderer.

That if there be any God or good Religion, then it is the Papists', because the service of God is performed with more ceremonies, as elevation of the mass, organs, singing men, shaven crowns, etc.

That all Protestants are hypocritical asses.

That if he were put to write a new religion, he would undertake a both more excellent and Admirable method.

That all they that love not Tobacco and Boys were fools.

That all the apostles were fishermen and base fellows, neither of wit nor worth, that Paul only had wit, but he was a timorous fellow in bidding men to be subject to magistrates against his conscience.

That he had as good a right to coin as the Queen of England, and that he was acquainted with one Poole, a prisoner in Newgate, who has great skill in mixture of metals, and having learned some things from him, he meant, through help of a cunning stamp-maker, to coin French crowns, pistolets, and English shillings.

That Richard Cholmeley has confessed that he was persuaded by Marlowe's reasons to become an Atheist.

That this Marlowe does not only hold these opinions himself, but almost into every company he comes he persuades men to Atheism, utterly scorning both God and His ministers, wherefore I, Richard Baines, think all men in Christianity ought to endeavour that the mouth of so dangerous a member may be stopped."

This document is received by the Privy Council of the Queen on May 29th 1593. Marlowe's protector Sir Thomas Walsingham was in touch with the Queen and Council and probably had immediate knowledge of the report, the only serious charge of which was Marlowe's knowledge of coining money. The Queen could forgive anything but that someone interfered in her national economy.

So Marlowe's life as a successful dramatist is put at the stake, and he has no alternative to have his career disrupted than to anticipate the authorities and interrupt it himself, which he doesn't hesitate to do the very following day. And instead of the successful playwright and national poet Marlowe we had the most difficult case in theatre history, a much worse and more tragic and complicated case than the naïve simpleton Oscar Wilde, who was not strong enough to cope with his own case. Not until 1895, the very year when Oscar Wilde was put to trial, it started to be observed that Marlowe and Shakespeare could be the same author, the theory was published in California by the lawyer William G. Ziegler, who had found out that Shakespeare's and Marlowe's style were identical. The coroner's report on Marlowe's death was discovered

30 years later in 1925, and 30 years later again Calvin Hoffman published his book "The Man Who Was Shakespeare" where he exposes the sensational results of 19 years of research, an extremely concentrated and substantial book containing enough circumstantial evidence to show that Marlowe himself staged his death to be able to continue developing his art in spite of the "vulgar scandal stamped upon his brow" (Sonnet 112) but under the name of his colleague, the most reliable actor and stage director William Shakespeare.

The problem of the Puritans seems to have been the Nemesis not only of Marlowe but of the entire Elizabethan age. The important key figure to the Shakespeare mystery William Stanley, earl of Derby, died 81 years old in 1642. Around the same time the civil war broke out, and all the theatres closed in all England for 18 years ahead. Later on in the civil war, the Puritans burned the castle and home of Lord Stanley including his invaluable library, where all the original manuscripts of the Shakespeare plays might have been kept.

*"My dear Shakespeare reader,*

Many thanks for sending me the Richard Baines report in full. As I had not read it before, it appeared to me as a stunning revelation. I am now prepared to reconsider the Shakespeare problem and to alter my position more in favour of Christopher Marlowe. In fact, this report could both be regarded as an explanation of the case and as close to clear evidence of Marlowe's authorship of the Shakespeare works as you can get.

The stunning thing about this report is the evil of it. Of course it is biased. Mr Richard Baines must have hated Christopher Marlowe. I see him as a petty official drudging on in obscurity with sordid paper work and with little chance of advancement in life. So he becomes a police spy specializing on informing against people. His motivation can't just have been safe-guarding the security of the state. Something about the successful genius of Christopher Marlowe must have revolted him, maybe Marlowe's audacity combined with some arrogance and insolence, but most probably Marlowe's clearcut and ruthless freedom of conscience. Mr Richard Baines must have been a complete Puritan, a bigot of the very worst kind, reacting against Marlowe's preposterous free-thinking as destructively as he possibly could. Mr Baines must have been fully aware, that his report was the complete devastation of Marlowe's career and life, and he must have written it in the very intention of effectively ruining the playwright's life.

Of course, the Queen, being the highest sponsor and lover of the Theatre in England, must have seen through Mr Baines' bias and vile intentions and been shocked. She could not have sanctioned the arrest of Marlowe and his execution. She could not have taken such a prejudiced Puritan report seriously. At the same time, she could not disregard the fact that Marlowe's knowledge of coining was a latent security risk which had to be dealt with. She probably summoned Sir Thomas Walsingham, Marlowe's benefactor, promptly and commanded him to do something about it, to dispose of the problem without disrupting Marlowe's most promising career as a playwright and poet. Walsingham, who was knighted a few years later, must have solved the problem to the Queen's satisfaction. Instead of Marlowe she got Shakespeare, the protégé of Henry Wriothesley, the earl of Southampton, and, more important, in the theatre company of Will Stanley, the sixth earl of Derby, perhaps the most influential political key person in England beside the Queen, being the leader of the Catholics with diplomatic connections all over Europe, if anything an international figure and the perfect underground diplomat to be able to advocate new plays in the untarnished and completely non-controversial name of William Shakespeare.

I am with you, Christian, in your rehabilitation push for Christopher Marlowe.

*Yours, John Bede."*

### *The Revelation of the Sonnets.*

Peter Quennell characterizes the sonnets as "a much visited cave with an infinite number of footprints outside the entrance, which show that many explorers have entered across its threshold but that none of them yet has come out of the cave." The 154 sonnets constitute the most difficult riddle in world literature. They tell a story, which no one has been able to interpret, and each effort to an interpretation has only made the interpretation more difficult. As a riddle it can perhaps only be compared with the prophecies of Nostradamus, which have caused as much speculation, but which have been interpreted with much greater ease than the Shakespearean sonnets.

But if you use the case of Christopher Marlowe for a mould and try to suit it into the hardly discernible pattern of the mysteries it is almost frighteningly much that fits, but still far from all. The extremely private and personal drama of the sonnets becomes visible but only faintly in the outlines.

Is it then at least possible from the sonnets to have a clear answer to our main question, namely who the poet really is? Let's have a look.

The first sonnets are the simplest. The poet loves a young man, whose beauty he wants him to preserve for the future by begetting a son. It's the purest and most beautiful thinkable expression of Platonic love when it is at its most constructive.

Sonnet 16 reveals there is a portrait of the man. This information inspired Oscar Wilde to write his most initiated speculation "The Portrait of Mr W.H." in 1888, a story which shows that Oscar Wilde perhaps deeper than anyone else tried to understand the sonnets but as a result only missed his shot more grossly than anyone else: He wants Mr W.H. to be a fair actor called Will Hughes, who is supposed to have been an expert on playing female parts. The idea is good although it remains 100% speculation.

In sonnet 20, Woman enters but so far without devastating consequences. But with sonnet 25 the self-confessions start to deepen and increase the reader's interest for the increasing mystery. This sonnet is especially interesting to our research, as it seems to definitely exclude William Stanley as a candidate to the authorship of Shakespeare's works, for here the poet's social position appears rather definite: He has no position, no titles, no public respect and is willingly detached from things like that, not with scorn but rather with some melancholy, as if he was well aware of his being excluded from all such possibilities in life.

In sonnet 29 he goes further and confesses to be in disgrace with Fortune and cries in self pity for his outcast state.

In sonnet 50 he is exiled. This theme of exile is remarkable and reoccurs constantly in the Shakespeare canon and is maybe the heaviest of all arguments for Marlowe. The exile theme appears already in the early comedy "The Two Gentlemen of Verona" and dominates also the comedies "As You Like It", "The Winter's Tale" and "The Tempest" and haunts most of the tragedies. The exile is always experienced and expressed as an extremely painful suffering but also with a kind of masochistic lust and pathos, as if the poet wallowed in that kind of suffering. The exile theme is driven to extremes in "King Lear", where the central part is driven to the highest degree of mental disorder by being driven into exile by his own family. Neither Shakespeare nor Stanley ever experienced being driven into exile.

In several sonnets he thinks of himself as a dead man, for example in 71 and 72, but in 73 we have another obvious indication. The only known portrait of Marlowe in

Corpus Christi College in Cambridge has a text in the upper left-hand corner which says in Latin: "*Quod nutrit me destruit*," ("That which nourishes me destroys me,") which the portrayed person himself wanted inscribed on the painting, as some sort of motto. It was painted in 1585 as Marlowe was 21 years old. This very statement and phrase reoccurs constantly throughout the works of Shakespeare in many varied forms, like in sonnet 73:

"In me thou seest the glowing of such fire  
That on the ashes of his youth doth lie,  
As the death-bed whereon it must expire,  
Consum'd with that which it was nourish'd by."

That Shakespeare or Stanley would copy and imitate Marlowe so directly or unawares in such extremely personal self-effusing poems as the sonnets, which all through breathe only the purest honesty, seems improbable to the highest possible degree. You can steal of others, but you can't copy another's spirit and publish it as your own. Here speaks the very same spirit that put the signature on the portrait.

In sonnet 74 he goes even farther in reflections over himself as dead:

"So then thou hast but lost the dregs of life,  
The prey of worms, my body being dead;  
The coward conquest of a wretch's knife,  
Too base of thee to be remembered."

Lines like these are completely incomprehensible and inexplicable unless you put them in context with Marlowe's staged death. Also in sonnet 112 he speaks of having had a "vulgar scandal" stamped upon his brow.

In sonnet 125 he speaks straight out:

"Hence, thou suborn'd informer! A true soul,  
When most impeach'd, stands least in thy control."

This sonnet is clearly one of the most autobiographical, where he also confesses himself "poor but free". This also is not compatible with neither Shakespeare nor Lord Stanley.

In sonnet 127 appears the dark lady with devouringly destructive passions for a result (sonnet 129), the most typical of all Marlowe syndromes: Platonic love is perfect, but sexual love is only devastating.

This is merely a sketch of the top of the iceberg. 90% of the real contents of the sonnets will perhaps always remain hopelessly unexplainable even with Marlowe for a guide. The fact remains, however, that with both Shakespeare and Stanley for guides even less of the sonnets can be grasped and explained.

We mentioned the exile theme in so many of the Shakespeare plays. Almost all the greatest writers of Europe have created their masterworks in exile, starting with Dante, who was exiled from Florence and wrote most of his Comedy in exile. Victor Hugo wrote his three unsurpassed novels "*Les Misérables*", "*Workers of the Sea*" and "*The Laughing Man*" in exile from France on the isle of Guernsey in the English Channel. Dostoyevsky was not allowed for many years to live in his city of St. Petersburg and wrote "*The Idiot*" and "*The Possessed*" in Germany. Ibsen wrote most of his plays in voluntary exile in Rome. Stefan Zweig wrote all his greatest books after the exile from Austria in 1934. Already Ovid, the Latin poet who is most frequently remembered and quoted in the works of Marlowe and Shakespeare, (Marlowe actually translated him,)

used his art in for instance "Tristia" in his exile from Rome as a kind of therapy to handle his anguished desperation. There is much to indicate that Marlowe in his enforced exile from England the more was motivated to create the more sublime masterpieces to fight and withstand the utter desperation of his loneliness. There are many indications in the sonnets that his love was telepathic.

Echoes of Marlowe occur not only in Oscar Wilde. Keats and Shelley were also exiled from England on different grounds, wrote their masterpieces and found their deaths in exile. Of all poets in England after Shakespeare, these two come the closest to the spirit and poetical ideal of Shakespeare.

By his fate Marlowe would find himself in the company of Beethoven, who by his deafness received the cruellest possible fate for his profession, and Dostoyevsky, who was condemned to death and had his life ruined by his political involvements in the writings of his youth. The last Shakespeare plays have often been compared with the last works of Beethoven. All these three, Marlowe, Beethoven and Dostoyevsky, were forced by their destinies to an extra effort of life and to a deeper not to say maximal concentration on their work, which luckier and happier artists never found.

### *The Controversies of Timon, Pericles and Henry VIII.*

They have been treated with some doubt as to their genuineness. "Timon of Athens", "Pericles" and "Henry VIII" separate themselves from the usual mannerisms of the poet and almost fall outside the frames of his art: *Timon* is rather a philosophical drama and unique as such in his production; *Pericles* is neither a comedy nor a tragedy but rather some kind of an entertainment almost like a vaudeville of rather an equivocal nature; and also *Henry VIII* is completely detached from all the previous chronicles by its almost documentary realism. Arguments have been raised that these plays might not have been written entirely by our poet.

We dare refute such arguments. There is only one scene in *Timon* which is doubtful, act III scene 5 in the Senate with Alcibiades and the senators, which honestly speaking seems to be manufactured in subsequence by some clot.

*Pericles* is a remarkable limbo play which doesn't seem to belong anywhere. It was excluded from *The First Folio* but was taken in later on, since some scenes unmistakably bear the imprint of our genius, especially the scene with the fishermen. The drama recounts the strange story of how prince Pericles of Tyre proposes to a lovely princess, who has an incestuous relationship with her father. In order to win her, Pericles must explain an impossible enigma, the answer to which is the very matter of incest, which answer Pericles is clever enough to discern, whereupon the father to the princess is taken by such a fear, that he has no option than to dispose of Pericles just because he has solved the riddle, in the same way that he disposed of all the previous suitors for not having solved the riddle. It's the old Turandot story all over again but in a more poignant version. Pericles has to flee to save his life, is wrecked in a storm and encounters lots of adventures, until he finds another princess, woos her and marries her and has a daughter; but in the difficult delivery on board of a ship and in the middle of a new wrecking storm his wife dies, whereupon she is buried at sea in a coffin. This coffin floats ashore and falls into the hands of a king who knows the art of resurrecting the dead: He brings the Queen back to life, who in her sense of being lost in life chooses to serve as a priestess in a temple until time will explain her life to her.

In the meanwhile the small girl, who in the storm is separated from her father, faces many strange adventures. She grows up and is taken care of by a bawdy-woman, who in vain tries to exploit her and offer her to clients: the girl is utterly impossible as a

whore, since she only preaches virtue and threatens the whole brothel business with bankruptcy. This is dramatically and psychologically the most interesting part of the play.

Pericles is himself totally inconsolable without his wife and daughter and allows his beard and hair to grow for years, until one day through a miracle he suddenly regains his Queen, daughter and his senses with even the whole of his old kingdom. Thus everything ends very well.

The drama is rather short and something like a parenthesis in the production but a most important missing link: It is obvious that the poet here experiments with new possibilities after having tired of the great tragedies and left them behind. *Pericles* is in fact the introduction to the last fairy plays, which all have the same form as *Pericles* but higher developed: the most impossible, difficult and complicated embroilments and disasters are turned by the unfathomable mechanisms of fate into bright redemption and triumphing human happiness.

*Henry VIII* is almost pedantic in its careful reconstruction of the falls of the Duke of Buckingham, Catherine of Aragon and Cardinal Wolsey. The play is very extensive, and nothing much happens really: people just talk and complain.

The representation of the case of Cardinal Wolsey, however, is of the greatest interest. He is in fact one of the poet's greatest and most impressing characters. It's difficult to imagine that this corrupt and ambitious cardinal might have been so interesting a person in reality.

We bring these plays to light here since they seem to have special bearings on Marlowe. In *Pericles* we have one of the very obvious: in Act II scene 2 six suitors to the lovely princess Thaisa parade. The fourth of them carries a torch upside down with the device: *Quod me alit, me extinguit*, ("What keeps me burning consumes me"), a variation of the motto of Marlowe *Quod nutrit me destruit*, or, as the Sonnet 73 renders it: *Consumed with that which it was nourished by*. Also the salacious intrigues of *Pericles* smell very much of the early Marlowe: such tendencies are evident in for instance "Dido, Queen of Carthage". None of the dramas in the name of Shakespeare reminds you so much of the early sexually liberated Marlowe as *Pericles* does.

We mentioned somewhere that Marlowe probably was the man behind the great theological war of pamphlets made by the pseudonym *Martin Marprelate* from Marlowe's hometown Canterbury. In the dramas under the name of Marlowe preceding his fall there is very much theology. In the Shakespeare dramas there is almost none whatsoever until suddenly in *Henry VIII* in the case of Wolsey. All of a sudden this poet speaks of God, which he has never done before. Robert Greene, one of Marlowe's colleagues, who is charged with having denounced and denigrated Shakespeare, appears to have had some admiration of Marlowe, since Greene publicly expressed that Marlowe had a prophetic spirit. Indeed, such a prophetic spirit permeates the whole of *Henry VIII* maybe more than any of the plays.

The Shakespeare connoisseur Carl O. Nordling has suggested that the poet of the dramas very well later might have written the great work published in the name of Robert Burton, the very meticulous and learned treatise called "*The Anatomy of Melancholy*", one of the favourite books of Doctor Johnson's. Our opinion was that neither Shakespeare nor Stanley were probable as authors of this work, while indeed it could fit into the picture of Marlowe. If Marlowe anonymously wrote the pamphlets under the name of Martin Marprelate, he might also very well have written "The Anatomy of Melancholy" and used Robert Burton as he used Shakespeare, being obliged to never again use his own name after the terrible denouncement of Richard Baines.

In view of this possibility you can see the Wolsey character as a missing link - a transition into a new phase of the poet's life: he abandons the theatre to return to where he started: in theology. We have admitted to Carl O. Nordling that "*The Anatomy of Melancholy*" in language and style perfectly fits as a natural continuation and development of the idea-world of the dramas, especially in view of the last great dramatical character in the poet's output, the unforgettable Cardinal Wolsey in his abysmal fall from wordliness and power to purest spirituality.

### *The Unfathomable Melancholy of Robert Burton.*

You can't deny it - Robert Burton's "The Anatomy of Melancholy" is a most impressive masterpiece and one of the very profoundest works of English literature in its strange disguise of scientific casualness. There is, however, much that speaks against Marlowe to stress the authorship of Burton to this work, since he so clearly emerges personally as an individual of idiosyncrasies. He is wholly an Oxford man (while Marlowe was all Cambridge,) he speaks in his work about his parents in a way which only a good son is capable of - with reverential criticism - and also includes in his work a translation from Latin which his younger brother Ralph has construed. (He had three brothers, and the oldest one, William, raised a monument on Robert after his death in 1640.) His great life's work, "*The Anatomy of Melancholy*", saw five editions during his lifetime (between 1621 and 1638), and each new edition was provided with new footnotes, additions and alterations. He is also a most circumstantial pedant, something that the author of the Shakespeare dramas never could afford to be. Burton is more a scientist than a poet, he often repeats himself and enjoys it, and although he can be very spiritual and entertaining he is never a creative artist but just a wise old priest with very much wisdom and knowledge of life but hopelessly a monologist, giving the impression of a preacher standing in his pulpit giving a universal sermon for all eternity.

There are some striking common denominators with Marlowe-Shakespeare however. He quotes Marlowe twice as often as Shakespeare, (only this is a matter of interest,) and the idea-world is principally the same. In the last play "Henry VIII" there are clear inclinations towards circumstantiality and pedantry, where the leading part is a priest who for the first time in Shakespearean drama pays any attention to the importance of God. And why would a comfortably established country clergyman of Segrave in Leicestershire, who hardly ever travelled outside his own county during his lifetime, commit his soul into lines like these:

"I was once so mad to bustle abroad and seek about for preferment, tire myself and trouble all my friends; but all my labour was unprofitable; for while death took off some of my friends, to others I was unknown; little liked by some, others made large promises; some pleaded strongly on my behalf, others fed me with vain hopes; while paying court to some, getting into favour with others, getting known to others, my best days were going, the years gliding by, my friends tired of my applications to them, and myself the worse for wear; so now, sick of the world and glutted with the falseness of human nature, I resign myself. I have had some bountiful patrons and noble benefactors, and I do thankfully acknowledge it; I have received some kindness, which may God repay, if not according to their wishes, yet according to their deserts, more peradventure than I deserve, though not to my desire, more of them that I did expect, yet not of others to my desert; neither am I ambitious or covetous all this while; what I have said, without prejudice or alteration shall stand. And now as a mired horse, that struggles at first with all his might and main to get out, but when he sees no remedy, that his beating will not serve, lies still, I have laboured in vain, rest now satisfied, and

Mine haven's found, fortune and hope, adieu!  
Mock others now, for I have done with you. (*Prudentius*)"  
(part 2, sect.3, mem.6)

Such words sound as coming directly out of the innermost depths of the anguished soul of Marlowe which was so profoundly wounded for life so early in its beginning, and he doesn't write them all in English but in significant parts in Latin. They hardly fit into the monotonous and narrow life of Robert Burton in his vicarage, who certainly never "bustled abroad", nor into the stable bourgeois life of Shakespeare with his very English small town life of means and property enough to be more than well contented, nor into the powerful aristocrat Lord Stanley, who certainly never had to write "applications"; while they fit almost too well into the self-confessions of the Sonnets and the sordid fate of Marlowe. Lines like these must provide fuel for the theory, that Marlowe's fate as a born poet was after Richard Baines' scandalizing denouncement to never again be able to write or publish anything in his own name but only under the cover of others', like Shakespeare's and Robert Burton's, and that he accepted this fate just to be able to at all continue to write, not entirely though without discreet protests in the almost surreptitious form of extremely carefully measured and guarded stealth.

The whole work is written to a large extent in Latin, and the text is constantly interrupted by Latin quotations, but also Greek appears occasionally. The author apparently also has a great penchant for Ovid (in remarkable similarity with Marlowe and Shakespeare) who is quoted more frequently than any other Latin writer including Cicero.

Such curious reminiscences of and clues to Marlowe-Shakespeare can't be ignored. The Marlowe chits in Burton are exactly of the same character as in Shakespeare: sudden flashes disappearing at once.

You get the same impression of Burton as of Marlowe-Shakespeare: here is a man who spends his life hard at work with only writing because he can't do anything else. Like Shakespeare ought to have been occupied with the practical work at his theatre for almost the entirety of his life, Burton would have been constantly busy with his pastoral duties; but "The Anatomy of Melancholy" shows an author who has read everything and knows the whole world literature by heart. He could hardly have done anything in his life but reading and writing. At the same time you find in Burton the same vast knowledge of the world and human nature as with Shakespeare, of which none ever placed their foot outside the soil of England. None of them ever "bustled abroad".

We can't decide the matter. We content ourselves with stating that it is possible, that Marlowe as a good and experienced actor on the stage of life, just as he dressed up in all the characters of Shakespeare as well as Shakespeare's own, he also could have entered into the character of the pedantic Oxonian Robert Burton in perhaps a vain effort to hide and forget himself: "Look now! I am neither Marlowe nor Shakespeare but the clergyman Robert Burton, and I prove it by telling you everything about myself, naming my parents and my brother and never mentioning Cambridge with one word!"

It's just a theory. The Marlowe theories are constantly whisked away by the fact that there is no evidence. It's true that we have no evidence, but there is also not a single piece of evidence to prove that Shakespeare or Stanley was the dramatic author, while there is more circumstantial evidence pointing towards Marlowe than to anyone else.

Most of the high quality of nobility, the dramatic tensivity and elegance not to speak of all the magnificent sense of humour which characterize the Shakespeare dramas have fallen out with Burton, who instead displays a higher developed universalism and greater concentration on the deepest of all human problems, which also the Shakespeare works indefatigably grapple with: the spiritual abysses of man.

The last word has not been said yet in this Shakespeare debate, which probably never will be concluded.

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Christian Lanciai.